

PETE WARLOW'S END.

A STORY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

I.

It was an unfortunate love-affair which was the prime cause of Peter Warlow's isolated mode of life, a mode for which Nature had not well fitted him. For many years after he left his home in the Eastern States he had been a humble follower at the tail of the crowd, one of that numerous class who have no marked originality either in virtue or vice. He had drifted aimlessly, just as the current set, from gold-field to lumber-camp and from city to wilderness, till he found himself one winter in the busy little town which is the capital of Vancouver Island.

There he met his fate in the shape of a florid young person who provided the music at a drinking-saloon. She was highly-coloured and by no means youthful, but her dashing airs brought her many adorers, whose gifts she never refused. Pete was dazzled, and lavished his gold-dust on her so freely that she viewed him with especial favour, and repaid him with many a wink and smile which the others did not see. Nevertheless in his absence she was always ready to make a joke of Pete's devotion; and when his last dollar was gone and no more gifts were forthcoming, she withdrew the light of her countenance from him. But he was infatuated and confident, and misunderstood her efforts to avoid him. He believed triumphantly that he,—the despised and bullied Pete, the butt of all the swaggering dare-devils about camp—was about to carry off this prize of a woman right out of their hands. So he waited patiently for his chance of an interview alone with her, and then declared his love and his plans.

"Marry you? A mean dead-broke devil like you?" the lady said. "And go up country, eh, and settle on a ranch? Oh! ain't it just grand! Me go on a ranch and spend my days slaving, with a shoal of brats like the rest of 'em, eh? Likely, ain't it? Think I'm a d—d fool like yourself?"

And then while Pete was still in helpless confusion she gave him the *coup de grace*, with a vigour and malice which stung him to the quick.

"But I say now," she laughed. "Ain't it joy to think what fun 'e boys'll have when I tell 'em!"

Poor Pete! He spoke not a word, but stumbled out of the place dazed and dumbfounded. In an instant his rosy paradise had vanished; and in its place, what a prospect! The consciousness that he had been a terrible fool and had been grossly hoodwinked was enough in itself. But to think that his mates should know it! His courage gave way altogether as he thought of their boisterous laughter and the jokes with which they would salute him; and with a suddenness of resolve quite unusual to him he determined to slip away from the whole trouble while yet there was time.

So from that day his old haunts knew him no more. His disappearance, and the cause of it, served his old companions for the laughter and gossip of a day, but they soon forgot him. In Pete's mind, however, the dreadful sense of shame and abasement remained fresh long enough, and he spent his time on the out-lying frontiers of the settlements, where he rarely met any one except the old trappers and "moss-backs" who led hermit lives in the forest. He was troubled with a vague discontent with

things in general and with the sense of a purposeless future which had never before oppressed him. It might be because of this; or, more probably, because of one or two chance meetings with his old mates on their travels, whose recollection of his love-adventure was aroused by the sight of him, so that they made some casual playful reference to it, which served to renew Pete's aversion to their society; but whatever the cause, Pete suddenly determined to turn "moss-back" himself and have a home of his own in some place where he could live unmolested. He had learnt the features of the coast well enough, so that when it came to the choice of a locality he knew where to go to find a place to suit him. An old canoe, bought for a few dollars of the Indians, served as his vehicle, and bore his scanty belongings; and with this he passed over the still strait waters which separate the northern part of Vancouver Island from the mainland, and headed into a sombre fiord,—one of those narrow rifts by which the sea in so many places in British Columbia gains access into the heart of the Cascade range—and for two whole days toiled steadily along it.

Sometimes he passed through narrows where black rock-walls rose up on either hand and the confined waters foamed and ran with every tide like a swift river, and sometimes through wide lake-like expanses where the dark unruffled surface reflected back every torrent-streaked precipice of the great pine-clad mountains. And always the curves of the channel hid from him all except the little breadth of water which lay before and behind him, and always he seemed to labour on across an enchanted mere whose boundaries were ever receding. Not till the third day did he reach the head of the fiord. Here a little beach of shingle edged a platform of flat land, the product of the river which flowed down from the interior; and here a few canoes drawn up out of the reach of the tide showed the proximity of an Indian village.

Pete's wandering life had brought him into frequent contact with the coast Indians,—Siwashes, as he called them; and he had picked up, like all his mates, the simple Chinook jargon which serves as a medium of communication between the races. Therefore now, landing, he made his way to the collection of loose split-plank structures, which formed the *rancherie*, in search of information. The dark-skinned inmates received him with lazy, half-indifferent curiosity, and their transitory interest in him seemed to vanish altogether when they found he had no whisky and did not wish to barter. But they answered his questions willingly enough, and he soon got all the information he wanted.

However he rested there for the remainder of the day, and chose one of the shanties wherein to pass the night. This he entered uninvited, and flung down his belongings with a rude declaration that it was his will to sleep there. The inmates of the place silently acquiesced, and Pete paid no further heed to them. He took the warmest place by the fire, displacing his long-suffering hosts as he stretched himself at full length, and was soon soundly and noisily asleep.

The Indians shuffled aside, and dozed off in their corners,—all except one, whose bright eyes glittered like sparks whenever the fire flickered high enough to light them. The eyes were those of a young girl, and as she crouched against the wall she gazed steadily over her knees at the heavy unconscious form of the guest. Once during the night an old squaw who slept against the opposite wall opened her eyes and watched the girl for a moment, and then asked, in soft gutturals, "Why does my daughter look so long on the gray-face? Nay, but he is a stupid dog." But the girl gave no reply, nor did she move her eyes from the sleeper.

In the morning when Pete awoke he began to prepare his coffee, clattering his tins noisily. But scarcely had he commenced when the girl stepped

quietly forward, took the kettle from his hands and cooked his morning meal herself. He regarded her with lazy insolence, but was well pleased to be spared this trouble. Then, when he had eaten and gathered together his utensils ready for departure, the girl took up the greater part and bore them down to his canoe. Moreover when she found that the craft was grounded she waded into the stream, and, when he had taken his place, launched it with a vigorous effort into deeper water. For these attentions the only thanks she received was Pete's good-humoured remark as the skiff left the shore.

"Well done, Tawny-hide!" said he. "What's the good of Siwashes anyhow, if a white's got to slush along same as if there warn't any!"

The girl watched him out of sight, and, when she turned to go, found her mother standing beside her.

"Is this he, then?" said the old woman contemptuously, with a wave of her hand in the direction Pete had taken. "My daughter despises our tribe-men and repels them; it is a pale-face she will have then, she is so proud! She would be like her father's sister Chagwint, whom she loves, a white-man's *klooch*!"

But the girl made no answer and went quietly back to the *rancherie*.

Meanwhile Pete was forcing his canoe upward against the strong clear current of the river, driving before him innumerable salmon which furrowed the water in their hasty flight. So long as the rocky bluffs hemmed in the stream he pressed on, but when, after a few hours' hard paddling, he reached a place where the mountains fell back leaving a little bay-like flat of alluvial land between two high spurs which jutted upon the river, he drew up his canoe. Here amid thick-set spruce and pine, just where the flat land touched the rocky slopes, he set to work to make himself a home; and now during the daytime the silence of that forest was broken by the regular tap of his great axe on the trunks,

and at times by the splintering crash of falling trees. Here indeed his isolation seemed complete. Nevertheless not many days had passed before there came a visitor to his camp. It was as he sat eating his rough noon-day meal that the broad smiling face and squat rounded form of the Siwash girl emerged gently from the dusky shadows of the forest in front of him.

"Hello, Si!" said he. "What do you want here?"

"Will you buy salmon?" asked the girl with a laugh, as she threw three or four dried fish at his feet.

Pete's stock of provisions was running low, and he was not sorry for this chance to renew it without the trouble of hunting, and a simple barter was soon arranged. But the girl seemed in no hurry to leave, and even when Pete had resumed his work she stood some time watching him. He, on his part, took no more notice of her; and by and by she was gone.

But this visit was the first of a series, and she brought more fish than Pete could get through. Nor was it her anxiety to trade which brought her, for frequently she would take no payment. Moreover she was always ready to help the man in any task which strained his strength, and he found her aid really invaluable in placing the heavy timbers of his hut. Indeed, Siwash though she was, he had got rather to enjoy her presence in the clearing, for, to tell the truth, he had already begun to find the solitude of the place more profound than he had foreseen.

Whereby it naturally came about that when the hut was finished and rendered habitable, it had two occupants, and one was the Siwash girl.

II.

TEN years in a city ; the sixth part of a lifetime ; but ten years in a forest of ages,—what is it?

The seasons have come and gone, and the winter snows have crept down over the pines from the mountain tops to

the river, and then have vanished and left no trace. Under the trees a shadowy silence that takes no note of time broods over the earth. But the clearing on the Tukamunk has grown every year a little wider and a little brighter and more homelike; and the man has passed his prime and is growing grizzled and stiffer; and his partner is no longer a round-limbed girl, but a strong-framed, angular, and somewhat ungainly woman. There is live-stock on the clearing too,—some oxen in the pen, and pigs and poultry stalking solemnly about, and a dog stands watching near the door. Altogether the place has become the home of a man; but the forest which hems it in is as savage and intractable as ever.

Pete seems for the most part passively and contentedly to have accepted his fate, and his days go quietly round as in a smooth eddy. He has a vague indefinite pleasure in the knowledge that this place is his home, and beyond that it is only occasionally that there is anything to cross his mind or trouble him. His partner is active and energetic, and he willingly leaves the details of their daily life in her hands. She is full of a wisdom which her people have learnt through ages of hardship, and knows far better than he how to wrest their necessities from forest and flood. It is she, too, who arranges the terms of profitable friendship on which they live with their only neighbours, her tribe at the *rancherie*. She has indeed been to him a protector and preserver, and without her he could scarcely have held ground in this place.

Wherefore no doubt he is grateful? It may be; but he gives no sign of it. He accepts her service thanklessly, as the birthright of his race; he treats her always as though she had neither feeling nor sympathy, a mere domestic animal whose toil he can command at pleasure. But she heeds it not,—is perhaps unconscious of it, since such is the only code she is acquainted with. What she knows, and feels, and rejoices in, is that this man, of a higher

race, is hers, hers by tribal rites that are sacred and binding. The envious and jealous ones at the *rancherie* may boastingly affect to deny his superiority; but she knows that the knowledge of it lies deep in the hearts of them all, and that they look up to her as one who has risen to a higher sphere. Thus her longing ambition has been fulfilled, and she labours on proud and contented. This coarse and awkward man is for her the type of his race.

They have lived all this time alone. Once or twice for a short space the faint cry of a child was heard in the hut, but the conditions did not favour such tender life, and the cry was soon hushed, and the mother silently dug a tiny grave under the huge pines.

Yet Pete's isolation has not been quite unbroken. After a time, as past memories faded, he had felt now and again a little impatient at the monotony of this forest life, and wished for society other than that of his Indian neighbours. Moreover he had secured a small store of pelts which he wished to barter for some needful goods and live-stock. Therefore he undertook a long canoe voyage to the mouth of the fiord, where a solitary lighthouse, standing on an out-lying island, marked the course of the coast-wise navigation. It also in some degree served as a trading-post, being often made a port of call by the sealers and trading schooners which passed it. The two keepers of the place welcomed Pete heartily, glad of the opportunity for companionship and gossip, and they readily arranged to procure for him the things he wanted.

Pete found this change so agreeable, that it was with quite a reluctant feeling that he left the place to return to his home on the Tukamunk. From that time his visits to the lighthouse became periodical, and he made them the medium of a profitable trade in pelts which he collected from the Siwashes. In this way he managed to keep in touch with his old life, hearing at the lighthouse all the news of the coast, and sometimes even meeting there an

old acquaintance returning from some prospecting expedition. In this way, too, Pete's whereabouts and his mode of life became known to his companions of the past, and thus it happened that once or twice they used his house as a convenient resting-place in their adventurous journeys over new ground.

On such occasions the presence of the woman caused no surprise, being indeed no more than they were accustomed to in such places. But, as illustrating their sentiment, it may be mentioned that by a well-understood code she kept quietly in the background so long as the guests remained, cooking and serving for them and Pete, but neither eating nor sitting with them, for had Pete allowed this it would have been counted a serious breach of hospitality, almost amounting to an insult.

After these visits, and also after his voyages to the lighthouse, Pete was always rather unsettled and ill-tempered, and it generally took several placid days on the clearing to restore him to his accustomed state of lazy equanimity.

At first his journeys down the fiord were made alone but he found them very toilsome, and after a time was glad to avail himself of the woman's capable aid. When first she went he left her at the mouth of the fiord before he crossed to the station, disliking that the men should see the nature of his company. But in their rude society this feeling soon wore off, and he no longer sought to conceal his partner's presence till she became well-known to the keepers. Thus they came at last to regard these voyages together as part of their regular life, and undertook them at stated seasons. Both enjoyed them, though from different reasons, Pete because they afforded him change and relief, and Si because not only did she thereby avoid a temporary separation to which she was averse, but also because she was able proudly to display herself in her post of honour in full sight of her

tribe as they passed the *rancherie*. These were, perhaps, her happiest moments.

III.

MANY a voyage 'up and down the inlet did they make before the event occurred which brought a sudden crisis in their lives.

This event was the arrival at the lighthouse of a letter for Pete. "Revenue-cutter left this last time she called," the lighthouse man said as he handed it to him. "Guess it's from the old folk, eh?" Pete showed no sign of elation at receiving it, and handled it clumsily as one unused to grasping matter so thin. He spelt laboriously through the address *Mr. Peter Warlow, it read, living near Indians, Tukamunk River, British Columby; to be left at Ilwattit Lighthouse till he calls*. There was no mistake, the letter was meant for him. He recognised the writing too; it was his mother's, and he wondered uneasily how she had learnt where he was. His recollections of home were not particularly pleasant. After his father's death, which occurred while he was quite young, the management of their farm had passed into the hands of a married elder sister and her husband, with whom he could never agree. He was no favourite, not even with his mother. As he grew up to take his share in the work, whatever went amiss on the place was laid to Pete's account, till he turned sullen and morose under their continual upbraidings; and when at last he rebelled and broke away, he left much ill-will behind. Hence his communications with the home-folk, always rare and unfrequent, had soon dropped altogether. For many years now he had heard nothing from them, and thought, if he thought at all on the matter, that they had forgotten him.

Pete stowed the letter away, and did not touch it again till he and Si were well on the return journey with only the cliffs and forests of the narrow inlet about them. Then, dropping his

paddle, he drew it forth and broke open the wrapper. As he did so a sudden flush came to his face as, half angrily and half-ashamed, he realised how far he had drifted from the ways of his kith and kin. He felt almost as if they were gathering round him again even here to torment him in their old fashion with petulant scoldings and complaints, which this time his conscience told him he deserved.

His embarrassment did not escape the notice of the woman as she sat steadily paddling in the stern, and she asked abruptly, "What is that?"

"A letter," answered her companion in English, for Si had learnt to understand his language and he would not lower himself to use another to her.

"Who sent it?"

"My people—way East."

She watched him as he slowly worked his way through it and read from his face as he from the paper.

My dear Peter, [the letter began,] I expect you will be surprised to get this but Jim Connell come back this fall to see his folk and tell us he heard you was up country in Columby from a man as had met you at a lighthouse. There has been lots of changes in the township since you left so as you would hardly know it,— and then it went on to tell the gossip of the village and the family, and how times had been hard but they had managed to pull through fairly well, how his sister had lost two of her children in the fever, but had still five left who were strong and healthy and mostly at work now. Then it continued,—*Our Davy is always pesterin us about letting him come West, havin' foolish ideas about fightin' Indians and such but his father and mother and me all says we's rayther die than see it; one in a family is enough disgrace and I must say Peter I never thought it on you with your rearin', Jim says you've taken up with a nasty black Indian squaw, which the same is as as low as anything can be and not been done by a Warlow before and I hope never will agin. What a blessin your poor father was took when he was, how he would have took on about it, and*

I do wonder Peter you havent knowed better than disgrace us all like this and that is why I wrote to tell you. It may be all right for you out West but right here its different I can tell you and has ben well talked about in this township and some people as we hate as took to pityin' us about it and the parson said somethin' at meetin' last week that everybody thought meant you about awful sinners and hell fire, and so hopin you are well as this leaves me no more at present from youre lovin mother — Sara Warlow.

As Pete read this a terrible sense of abasement seized him, as it had seized him once before, and for some time he dared not lift his eyes. When, at last, he glanced uneasily across to the silent woman in the stern, he caught her keen watchful gaze upon him and flinched under it. Then, turning, he took up his paddle, and made the boat leap under the angry vigour of his strokes. Si noticed his behaviour with vague alarm, but she asked no further questions, and they sped along for mile after mile with no sound save the drip of water from the paddles and the swish of wavelets under the prow.

The unpalatable words of that letter had banished for ever the man's peace of mind. The more he ruminated upon them the bitterer they tasted. Moreover they had struck a chord which had been feebly vibrating within him for some time. The feelings which had prompted him to betake himself to the solitude of the Tukamunk had died out, and he knew now that the dullness of the forest had grown irksome to him. And his conscience had never quite accepted the presence of the Siwash woman under his roof, for he knew that he had never intended that the tribal rites he had gone through with her should be binding upon him. He felt that it was only his magnanimity which permitted her presence in his hut so long; and sometimes, when the vague notion that he might some day wish to break away from his present mode of life had presented

itself to him, he had realised, with no little irritation, that the woman's position would be a serious restraint upon him.

Therefore now, after trying in vain to counteract the sting of his mother's reproaches by telling himself that the folk East had nothing to do with him here, where he might live as he best pleased, his resentment blazed out against the woman who was the unconscious cause of his disgrace. All day long he brooded and fumed in silence, and reached the place for their night's encampment in an extremely vicious temper, which he was careless to conceal. But Si, though jealous and distrustful of the letter, was too familiar with his curses and his ill-natured behaviour when things went amiss to be at first seriously disturbed, and she went calmly and phlegmatically about the business of the camp without heeding him. She showed indeed at all times small respect for his moods.

So she prepared food and set it before him, and they ate their evening meal. But when Pete's viciousness continued even after he had eaten, she was alarmed and began reluctantly to recognise in him a tone to which she was a stranger. At last she lost patience and retaliated, and then the man, glad of the excuse, gave full vent to his violence. But she met him with a cool, firm front that maddened him, till, quite beside himself with rage, he raised his arm to strike her. In an instant his wrist was grasped with a restraining grip that he could not shake off, and in the brief wrestle to free himself he found the woman was his equal in strength. Then he foamed and shrieked, and said what in a soberer moment he dared not.

"You black-faced she-wolf!" he shouted. "Ain't it damnation enough to live with you anyhow, without being told by my own flesh and blood that it's a disgrace I am to the family and the township? But I'll have no more of it! You'll go back to your thieving tribe, and that mighty quick; an'

I'll quit! D'ye think I'm goin' to be plagued this way, an' all on account of a d——d Siwash *klooch*?"

She saw he had spoken from his heart. Her hold relaxed and her hands dropped passively to her side. She seemed stunned; but Pete, looking up, saw an expression on her face which checked him even in the full enjoyment of his passion, and he wished he had said less. He turned away sullenly, muttering some words in a softer tone, but she paid no heed, standing motionless and statue-like. She was facing a grave eventuality. She had often vaguely feared it might some day happen, but now, all at once, it was actually threatening her, and close at hand. This man—the one great achievement and glory of her life, who was hers by every right and was acknowledged as hers by all her people, who was bound to her irrevocably, and she to him,—had said he would leave her; and she could not stay him. She had served him faithfully and laboured hard for him, but that mattered not, and she knew it. He would break all pledges and would return to the pale-faces,—perhaps even take a pale-face wife. And she,—she must go back alone to face the jeers and taunts of all her people, as one who had been outwitted and disgraced. Should she suffer this then, at the hands of this man? Though she loved him and honoured him, she had long since discovered that he was her inferior in everything save in race, and had come to think of him as one whom she could sway at will. Yet now, with one sudden bound, he seemed to have passed completely out of her power. And what should she do?

She stood so long motionless that Pete grew quite uneasy and tried to disturb her by fidgeting with the fire. Finding this of no avail, he affected to ignore her. He spread his blankets by the fire and stretched out at full length for his night's rest: he even professed to close his eyes; but it was the merest pretence, and he was in reality watching her anxiously.

Her fierce eyes were bent upon the flame of the fire as though she sought some guidance in it, and it seemed hours before she stirred. But at last she suddenly found the solution she had waited for. Stepping silently nearer to the recumbent man she stooped down, and lightly and deftly took up a handful of glowing embers from the fire. Her eyes were fixed steadily on his, and he started up, thinking for a moment that she was about to revenge herself by throwing the coals upon him. But she drew herself up stiffly to her full height, and slowly and deliberately scattered the burning fragments along her own extended bare left arm. She never flinched nor shifted her eyes from his, while the cinders seared her flesh and her face preserved its expressionless stolidity.

Pete watched this rite, if rite it was, without in the least comprehending it; but he was thoroughly scared, remembering the many strange tales he had heard of the power of Indian medicine, and he wished himself anywhere but in this dark forest with this wild woman before him and the black gurgling water behind. Could it be possible he had lived familiarly for so many years with this ominous figure,—the very incarnation of untameable savagery? The effect of their long companionship had sunk in an instant, and a great gulf,—the gulf of their ancestry—separated them. He wondered what was to follow and nervously awaited her next movements. But when the embers had grown black and cold, she shook them off and sank quietly down by the fire as if to rest. Pete watched her warily for some time, till she had passed into profound sleep, and then he could no longer overcome his own weariness and slept also.

When in the morning they prepared to resume their journey, it seemed as though all memory of the passion of the night had passed away in the daylight. But red scars stood out vividly on the woman's arm.

IV.

WHEN they reached their home on the Tukamunk after this journey, the pair sank back into their accustomed habits, and everything apparently went on in the old groove. But the slender bond which had held them together was snapped; and each knew it though they spoke not of it, and the mind of each was busy with schemes. Pete's indolent negligence of past and future had gone, and in its place had arisen a yearning for civilisation, a consuming desire to get out of the gloomy forest, and away from this savage life. And along with this, the sense of restraint which the presence of the woman caused him grew constantly heavier, and he chafed under it. She on her part saw the evil day swiftly approaching when she might become "*The white-man-departed-klooch*," and have to face the savage malice of the discarded braves and envious women at the *rancherie*. And whenever she looked at the scars on her arm her face grew stony and expressionless.

Pete became conscious that he was suspected and watched, and the knowledge of this was the spur which his irresolute nature required. He determined to break away at once.

But many difficulties arose when he tried to plan how to carry out his purpose. He would vastly have liked to have gone openly and boldly,—to have told the woman of his intention and to have dismissed her to her tribe. Then he could have gone out with as much of his property as was portable. But he flinched at the very thought of having to face her in cold blood with such a declaration, and he knew moreover that he was powerless to assert his will if she defied him. No, not even though he should leave all his possessions behind, and thus make her rich in the eyes of her people, dare he tell her what he was about to do. He was perfectly well aware that hers was not a nature which could be bribed in this way.

The only plan he could hit upon was that of secret flight, and it fretted him to think there was no other way. What! was he a nigger, or a Chinaman, that he should be held and watched by a d——d Siwash, and be obliged to slide like this! When, too, it was a proper thing—a Christian thing—he was going to do! He had no great stock of religion, but it was no use going to hell for certain and knowingly, and yet this d——d *klooch* would hold him and send him there; and he was not to get away as he liked!

But in spite of much blustering soliloquy of this kind, he did prepare to slip secretly away. One route only was open to him, and that was by the river and the inlet, for the woods were pathless and impassable, a tangled mass of undergrowth and windfall, and the mountains around him were desolate and waste. Therefore he must travel by water, and the lighthouse must be his goal. Once there, he could readily find passage to civilised regions, where he could start life afresh. Had it not been for their recent visit he might have gone off easily by stratagem, under pretence of making the customary journey. But he knew that to suggest so unusual a thing as a second voyage now would be certain to increase the woman's suspicions, and he realised that he was no match for her in craftiness. So, thinking to take her quite unawares, he chose his time, and having ostentatiously proclaimed overnight that he should start early on the morrow for a long day's hunt on the mountain, he arose at grey dawn and went down cautiously to the river-side. Beside his gun and weapons he carried with him only his axe and one or two other easily portable things which he prized, and when his dog tried to follow him he turned savagely upon it, and, kicking it, sent it whimpering back. He soon reached the canoe, embarked, and pushed off with exultation into the swift stream.

But it had also occurred to some one else that the only way of escape for a fugitive was by the river, and that per-

son had taken steps to bar the passage. So that now, before he had gone many yards, Pete found the water pouring in upon him through a gaping chink in the bottom of his craft which had been carefully pegged open and lightly plugged with earth. Before he knew what he was about, the boat had filled and rolled over, and he was struggling for his life in the middle of the deep and rapid river. He was a poor swimmer at the best, and now, encumbered as he was with his hunting-belt and weapons, it is very doubtful whether with his utmost efforts he could have reached the shore. But scarcely had he uttered his first astonished cry for help, when a scantily-clad figure appeared suddenly on the bank, hung poised for an instant over the water, then plunged, and with a few easy strokes was alongside, buoying him up. They soon drifted to the bank and Pete dragged himself out, dazed but uninjured, a wretched dripping spectacle. Then he recognised in his rescuer the woman whom he had left, as he thought, fast asleep in the hut.

She led him back to the hut in silence and stripped off the heaviest of his soaking raiment. When he was seated comfortably before a roaring fire of pine-logs, she asked abruptly, "Where were you going?"

"To the lighthouse," was Pete's surly reply.

"Why? It is not yet your time for it."

At first Pete deigned no answer. His anger was boiling at the whole affair, and especially at the loss of his gun and tools which had vanished in the river, and this questioning was the last straw. But the woman quietly persisted, and repeated her inquiry.

"H——! To please myself," said he savagely, at last.

"Aha!" continued the woman. "How long would you have stayed?"

"Until you were dead! D'ye hear me! —dead,—dead,—you black witch, you!"

That was the answer she got, and those were the only thanks she received for saving his life.

V.

THERE was no help for it now, and no need for concealment. Pete sat sullenly over the fire, a prisoner whose sole hope and aim was to make a speedy escape. And the woman who moved about the hut with hard impassive face was his jailer whose determination it was to prevent him. A stern resolve that he should not go was her one fixed thought. She had vowed it from the first, and the red scars on her arm shone redder in token. Yet how should she hinder him? His boat was gone, but he could steal another from the *rancherie*, or could frame some raft which would float him beyond her reach. He might even in his obstinacy take to the forest, and run the chance of forcing his way through.

There was indeed one way to stop him. "Is it to be?" she muttered as she thought of it. Far better that she should have left him to drown in the river; but that act of hers in saving him was instinctive, she could not help it. Instinctive too was her sudden tenderness when Pete bared his forearm and showed a bleeding wound which he had received from his axe in his struggle to save himself when the canoe upset. He had frequently before had recourse to her skill in healing such hurts, and was glad enough now to let her dress it, which she did carefully and speedily. And she immediately set about to prepare a soothing poultice which should relieve the pain.

Like all the women of her tribe, she was learned in the properties of herbs and shrubs both beneficent and baneful, and she kept a store always by her in the hut. She resorted to this store now, and began to select from among the heap of dried plants. As she did so a sudden impulse struck her which caused her to pause awhile. For a moment she was undecided; then she put aside the herbs she had already taken, and chose others. There was a slight tremor in her hand in doing this, but her face remained fixed and im-

passive as ever. It required dexterous and repeated manipulation to extract the virtues of these herbs, and as she held her pan over the glowing log-fire, with the glint upon her swarthy face, she looked more witch-like than ever.

But when the poultice was at last prepared, and deftly applied, Pete found the relief so immediate and so grateful, that he was constrained to mutter his surly approbation. And this kindliness, perhaps because she had long been strange to it, brought quite a spasm of feeling into the woman's face. Indeed at this moment there seemed to be more sympathy between them than at any time since their memorable visit to the light-house.

No doubt it was because of this encouragement that the woman was so assiduous in her attention to Pete's hurt. Several times during the day did she examine it and renew the dressing. Her treatment was so successful that next morning the cut had almost healed. Nevertheless Pete felt dull and oppressed, and he hung heavily about the hut all day. He blamed the chill he had got when in the river, and the woman told him he must take care and keep quiet if he would ward off a more serious attack; no doubt with another day's rest he would be himself again.

But another day found Pete worse instead of better. His wounded limb had suddenly become inflamed and swollen, and gave him intolerable pain. Moreover a high fever was evidently raging in his blood. He sat close over the fire with shivering frame and chattering teeth. His mind was filled with gloomy forebodings. Was it chills and fever, or what was it? Long before night he was too weak to hold up any longer and was glad to lie down in his bunk. There he lay, moaning and tossing restlessly from side to side, feeling his utter powerlessness. His thoughts wandered anxiously from one thing to another, and suddenly he lighted upon a dreadful presentiment which completely unnerved him. He

started up with wild staring eyes and turned his trembling head towards the woman.

"Si!" he gasped. "Say, Si! You won't, will you, Si? Oh! do promise you won't!"

"What?" asked the Siwash quietly, turning to face him.

"You won't leave me, will you, Si? Oh! don't—don't leave me here alone!"

She made no reply, but she looked straight at him for a few moments with a look which was full of stern, reproachful meaning. He could not bear it: it roused his remorse; and he sank back abashed, and in torture. He forebore to toss about awhile, and tried to think. One awful memory he was conscious of, and tried to evade. But all to no purpose; strive as he would that horrible picture was always before him, and his mind would run in no other direction. He could think of nothing but the grim skeleton of a man lying wrapped in rotting blankets in a hard bunk like his own, with one bony arm stretched out as if in vain attempt to reach the rusty water-can upon the floor. That was what he saw once long ago when he and his mates had come upon a lonely log-hut hidden away, like his, in the wilderness. They had to push aside the brush and underwood which blocked the door before they could enter. He had not thought of it for years; yet now he could think of nothing else. Every forgotten detail came back with burning distinctness; he saw the charred wood on the hearth, the cooking-pots on the bench, the rusty gun,—everything. Horrible! Alone and unattended, when aid might mean life! Great Heaven! was that poor moss-back's fate to be his?

"For God's sake, Si, don't leave me!" he shouted out in agony. There was something so strange and so pathetic in the cry that his dog came trotting up to the door and looked anxiously within. But the woman's grave lips were firmly closed and no reply passed them. She moved to the sick man's side and gave him drink and

wrapped the blankets closer round him; but when he strove to lay his hot hand upon her to detain her, she slid away, and crouched on her low seat by the fire.

Night came,—a placid night, with many stars; and then a bright moon arose, striking dark shadows from the calm pines into the clearing.

The sufferer woke from fitful slumber and turned his heavy eyes to the hearth where the woman had sat. Instantly his eyes flew wide open, and with a violent effort he lifted himself to his elbow. She was no longer there! He spoke,—there was no answer. He shouted, then listened. There came back an echo from the woods, and then deep silence. He could hear the distant river, and the peaceful munching of his cattle in their stalls; but nothing else. He was going to shout again, but his voice failed him, and his eyes were riveted to a moving thing which he could see through the open door. It was beyond the moonlit space, among the shadows of the pines. It beckoned, and drew nearer. It crossed the clearing slowly in the full light of the moon and stood at the door of the hut, still beckoning. Then he found his voice and shrieked, but the skeleton was not stayed. It approached his bed; it grasped him. And then there came delirium and madness, and the quiet woods re-echoed with his wild ravings.

His shivering dog ventured unbidden across the threshold and ran forward to lick his outstretched hand, but shrank back sadly on receiving no touch of recognition, and lay trembling on the hearth.

Hours passed, and daylight came, and still the sick man tossed and raved, and still there came no Si to nurse him. Noon and there was no change, save that he had sunk now into an unwholesome sleep of exhaustion. Suddenly the dog sprang up and ran to the door, barking violently. There he became suddenly still, and trotted to and fro between the threshold and his master's bunk, with many signs of subdued joy and excitement, evidently expecting

that some one would follow him to the bedside. But no one came, and the dog stopped and gazed wistfully and doubtfully around for a few moments, and then once more curled up, puzzled and shivering, on the hearth, his furtive glances seeking now his master and now a little chink in the timbers of the walls.

Through that chink a bright eye gazed steadily upon the unconscious man. It was the woman who had returned. She had meant to stay away longer, but had found she could not. She did not come to help him; what she had done had been done deliberately, and had no remorse. She could kill this man; but she could not leave him. So she stood there, leaning against the wall of the shack for hour after hour. She stirred not, neither when the sick man's delirium raged high and his hoarse cries filled the air, nor when in lucid intervals she could just hear his faint and piteous appeal for Si to come and bring him water. Daylight faded and night came, and then the end drew near. The raving sank into restless muttering; and soon no sound was heard but the deep laboured breath of the dying man.

Then, and not till then, did the watcher quit her post. She went in and stood by the bedside, but the man lay prone with half closed eyes and heeded not. She stooped down and moistened his lips. He gasped painfully once or twice as if in an involuntary attempt to swallow, and his fingers clutched the blanket. Then his eyes slowly opened wide, but he saw nothing. The woman's countenance suddenly softened and her lips quivered convul-

sively. She bent yet lower and gently kissed him. When she raised her head the savage look had left her face, and it was full of tenderness and sorrow.

She seated herself beside him, her head bowed upon her hands, and wept silently. All night, and all next day that crouching figure mourned beside the bunk; but when darkness came again she rose and left the hut. She went across to the enclosure of the untended cattle, and unbarring it drove out the animals and set them free. Then she returned, bearing straw and pine branches, which she heaped within the hut and prepared to light the funeral pile. She sought to drive out the dog, but the trembling creature crouched and crept from corner to corner under her buffets, and would not leave the place. So she left him to his fate and set fire to the straw. The dry pine-timbers of the building were soon aflame, and for a short space the dark ring of forest gleamed under the red glare. But by morning there remained nothing but a heap of smouldering ashes.

The woman went sadly back to her tribe. They asked her at first where the man was. But when with a stern look that closed inquiry, she replied "He is dead, and his house is burned," they sought to know no more. They knew that a tragedy had been enacted; but it sufficed for them that it was the White and not the Siwash who had suffered, and they honoured the woman accordingly. But she repelled all their advances,—dwelling scornfully apart, and thinking always of the man she had killed.

GEORGE FLAMBRO.